DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 044 338 SO 000 333

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TITLE Getting Asia into the Curriculum: Why is it Taking So Long?
INSTITUTION Ohio State Univ., Columbus.
PUB DATE 13 Oct 70
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Conference on "Curriculum Change and Asian Studies: The Ohio Plan," The Center for Tomorrow, Ohio State Univ., Columbus, Oct 12-13, 1970

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.45
DESCRIPTORS *Adoption (Ideas), *Curriculum Development, *Diffusion, *Educational Change, *Educational Innovation, Social Studies

ABSTRACT

The author postulates that insufficient and inefficient diffusion and evaluation rather than lack of research and development are responsible for slow educational change. Breakdown points are discussed. Adoption or change efforts should be based on principles supported by research to maximize diffusion and make early adopters aware of a program or product through their most used sources of information: newsletters, conferences, convention section meetings. Effort also should be made to encourage small trial programs and emphasize the better job being done through the innovation. With a complex unit or course widespread trial of a four-day unit that requires few changes in teacher behavior is most effective. Materials should be devised so that they can be adapted or finished at the local level and a feedback system included. Early adopters should be trained to test the innovation and to install it for others on a trial basis. (VLW)

ED044338

GETTING ASIA INTO THE CURRICULUM: WHY IS IT TAKING SO LONG?

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Paper Delivered at a Conference on
"Curriculum Change and Asian Studies: The Ohio Plan"

The Center for Tomorrow
Ohio State University
October 12-13, 1970

A few weeks ago I paid a visit to the Parts Department of my local Ford dealer. I wanted to buy a can of Ford's silicone polish for my new car, since that was the only finish preserver recommended in the owner's manual. The middle-aged man behind the counter said that he had never heard of the stuff, and besides, he had always used regular paste wax on his Fords, and it worked fine. Not easily discouraged, I persisted. Would he please order some? Nope, because it only came in case lots and he was sure that no one else would buy any. He found singularly unimpressive my argument that this was the preservative recommended by the engineers at Ford. I finally was able to purchase a bottle of the preservative while on vacation in Maine, but the Bloomington Ford dealer may never stock it.

I tell this story because I believe that it illustrates a problem common to education, namely a breakdown in diffusion. At least in Bloomington, the Ford Motor Company lacks an effective disseminator.

As I understand it, the purpose of this conference is to plan ways of furthering Asian Studies in the secondary schools of Ohio. Put another way, we wish to change the way Ohio schools deal with Asia in their social studies curricula.

Edwin Fenton has often referred to the influence of one's frame of reference and indeed I bring a particular one to this educational change problem. When I think of change it is in terms of a four stage conceptual model which includes RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, DIFFUSION, and ADOPTION. Let's see how the problem sorts itself out if you look at it through this model. Obviously our goal is to cause schools to ADOPT new products and practices relating to teaching about Asia, infering that most have not done so. Why hasn't such adoption occurred? Certainly it isn't for lack of social science and historical RESEARCH on Asia. The problem there is one of too much rather than too little. Things aren't quite as bright at the DEVELOPMENT stage, though the situation is improving. In fact, as I read the report of the New York conference I was reminded that Seymour Fersh called for a moratorium on the development of still more materials on Asia. I don't fully agree with Sy's recommendation because much of the material currently available consists of bits and pieces which the busy teacher has neither the time nor training to put together in a meaningful package. Certainly the Berkley Asian Studies Curriculum Project's work is a bright exception to this statement, though I still support the notion that a Project Asia, much like Project Africa, is needed. For the purposes of this discussion however, the point is that change has not been short circuited by a lack of DEVELOPED materials and practices, a point reinforced with each new issue of Frank Buchanan's Focus.

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If we look at the model you will see that through a process of elimination I've identified what I believe to be the stage at which the change process seems to stop. If there is adequate RESEARCH, and if we have experienced the necessary minimum of DEVELOPMENT, and if most schools have yet to ADOPT these new products and ways of doing things, the problem must lie in the DIFFUSION and ADOPTION stages and this is where I think we have much in common with Ford.

If my analysis up to this point is valid and if we wish to plan for a wider adoption of new ways of treating Asia in the school curriculum; then we must try to identify the breakdown points in the DIFFUSION and ADOPTION stages. Perhaps the most efficient way to do this is to look at the various processes in each of these major stages.

AWARENESS is the first stage of diffusion. At this point the individual learns of the existence of the innovation. I submit that at this point we already exclude many schools simply because they have never heard of the innovations we wish they would adopt. Surprised! Don't be. There are reasonable explanations for this state of affairs.

One reason for the lack of awareness is the absence of a well developed net of professional communications through which information about innovations is disseminated. Based upon my experience in Indiana I'm willing to venture a guess that fewer than 10% of the potential adopters here in Ohio regularly receive information about innovations in world history in general or Asia in particular. I think it is useful to occasionally remind ourselves that most social studies teachers do not receive Social Education, do not belong to a state or regional social studies organization, do not attend the meetings of the NCSS or the Association for Asian Studies. A communications net consists of not only message senders, but also of receivers of those messages and it is in this latter respect that the net is underdeveloped.

There is another reason why educational inventions remain invisible, even to the extent that schools ten miles apart often know little about what the other is doing. The role expectation of teachers does not include publishing articles describing one's activities. As editor of News and Notes on the Social Sciences one of my most difficult tasks has been to get teachers to describe what they are doing. This is partly due to the fact that some teachers simply do not write well but I suspect that a much more powerful negative influence is the professional myth that it is unprofessional to blow one's own horn. The result of such a myth is that we continually reinvent the wheel at tremendous local cost in time, energy and dollars. Contrast this with the way that surgeons flock to learn and use a new operating procedure "invented" by a colleague. Those of us in education must devise some process that will allow our Christian Barnards to go into print or on TV rather than into seclusion.

The second stage of diffusion is INTEREST, that point at which the individual seeks more information about, and considers the merits of, the innovation. Here we are talking about another group of educators, i.e., those who have heard of the innovations in Asian studies but who have sought no further information about them. Often this failure to generate interest results from the way in which the potential adopter initially becomes aware of the innovation. Research indicates that the early adopters depend more upon cosmopolite sources of information such as newsletters and conventions, than do the middle and late adopters,

who look much more to personal sources for their information. The face behind the message appears to be an important variable in generating interest and keeping change alive.

How one learns about the innovation is also important. Recall if you will, that the vacuum cleaner salesman doesn't call you on the phone and describe what a great job his product will do. Instead, he comes to your home to demonstrate how his product will meet your cleaning needs. In my own experience it didn't take me long to realize that if I wanted to convince teachers of the merits of inquiry I was going to have to stop describing inquiry teaching and begin demonstrating it with their students in their schools. It would be difficult for us to overestimate the importance of demonstrating the innovation in classroom settings similar to those of the potential adopters, which is at least one reason why so many laboratory schools are being closed; which brings me to the third stage of diffusion, namely EVALUATION.

The EVALUATION stage is that point at which the potential adopter mentally weighs the merits of the innovation for his particular situation. This go - no go decision stage is a vital one if we are to change the teaching about Asia in the schools. All our efforts will be wasted if the potential adopter decides at this point that the materials or practices are not for him. If we are to increase our chances of success we need to realize what factors seem to influence many to decide not to move on to the trial stage, first step in the adoption process.

One negative force which we must take into account is the fact that many of the new innovations require the adopter to acquire new attitudes, knowledge or skills. This is particularly true when we talk about changing how schools deal with Asia in the curriculum. The academic preparation of many teachers includes no work related to that area, at least beyond the college survey course in world history. I suggest, however, that this is less of a problem than the scholars would like to admit. The Anthropology Curriculum Study Project and the High School Curriculum Center in Government have both found that the students of teachers who had had no subject matter preparation in anthropology or behavorial political science are as successful with their materials, in terms of student learning, as those teachers who were "well trained." Perhaps Barry Beyer can tell us what experience Project Africa has had in this regard.

A far more difficult problem revolves around the skills and attitudes necessary for a teacher to engage both himself and his students in inquiry, a process repeatedly recommended at the New York conference and reported in the document which all of us read prior to this meeting. Many teachers find the notion of joining the students as a fellow inquirer to be threatening indeed. Even when the flesh is willing the potential adopter may lack such basic inquiry skills as the ability to develop a testable hypothesis, distinguish between factual and value claims, between concepts and principles. If the adoption of the innovation requires such skills on the part of the adopter the change process is very likely to stall unless the developer or the diffusor specifically assists teachers in acquiring such skills. Some projects have already tested models which the AAS and the Ohio Planners might find appropriate. The Greater Cleveland Social Studies Program, for example, has developed an in-service package for teachers participating in that program. The package contains a series of audio tapes, teachers manual, and an administrator's manual, all designed to make the concept "social science" more meaningful to teachers. The High School Geography Project

has produced three teacher education kits which use student materials and exercises to introduce teachers to new skills in the areas of simulation, using media, and evaluation. According to a report in the September 1970 issue of the HSGP NEWSLETTER an overwhelming majority of the trail users of those kits reported that they were more useful than other educational courses or workshops.* The Carnagie-Mellon, Indiana Government, Anthropology, and Sociology Projects have all produced films to illustrate to potential adopters what skills are needed in using their materials.

For the developer to design and test such kits fulfills his obligations, at least as defined by the model which I'm using today. Once the kits are available the responsibility shifts to those working at the diffusion and adoption stages.

At this point in the diffusion process we encounter another professional myth which tends to abort change. The myth to which I refer is that which says that it is unprofessional to borrow a product or practice invented by someone else. Those of us at the colleges and universities must take a major portion of the blame for perpetuating this myth. We caution young teachers to be skeptical of prepackaged curriculum materials and send them off like budding young developers to develop resource units, a task they will probably never again face after graduation. So turned off are they by such assignments that even when they are later presented with carefully done resource units developed by committees of their colleagues they often choose to ignore them. I wonder if a farmer feels less a man when he applies a fertilizer which he didn't invent. Certainly if we wish to be successful disseminators we should never imply that one is less professional for carefully selecting an innovation developed by another.

Still another force operating to stall change at the evaluation stage is the fear that teachers and administrators have of community sanctions. Harmon Zeigler has documented such fears, and while they are often unfounded they are nonetheless real and damaging to the change process. I hope that putting Asia into the curriculum or changing what and how we teach about Asia is not really very controversial in most communities, at least until we begin to include a discussion of Asian sexual practices. Even so, the disseminator should always take these fears into account and provide the potential adopter with suggestions of how to neutralize such community opposition. Now that universities and scholars are in general disrepute with the working man, this will have to go beyond simple endorsements by the AAS and similar interest groups. Jim Hantula will discuss a rationale for teaching about Asia which may prove helpful in this regard.

Still another factor obstructing change at the evaluation stage is the lack of a clear feedback system which can reinforce our change efforts. When the farmer uses a new fertilizer he judges its worth by whether or not he harvests more bushels per acre in the fall. The doctor judges the new drug by the reaction of the patient. In contrast, by which criteria is the adopter to judge the success of the innovation relating to Asia? What will the new units or practices result in the students being able to do after such instruction, that

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* "Teacher Education Kits Received With Enthusiasm," NEWSLETTER 19, Sept., 1970. p.2.

they couldn't have done without it? I don't know how you feel about performance objectives, but you must admit they would provide us with more useful feedback in judging the worth of the recently adopted innovation.

Until we can more precisely document the merits of the products and practices we use perhaps the fears of community sanctions are not without foundation. In any case, the diffusor has an obligation to provide data about the performance of the innovation he is advocating. This is not to say that potential adopters always ask to see the evaluation results of the product which they are considering. Many publishers in fact, report just the opposite, and that the time and money spent in careful evaluation efforts can only hurt rather than help sales of their particular product. We all know of enough schools who change for the sake of change to grant that the publishers may have a point. However, I predict that as the accountability movement gains momentum, as it must as education becomes increasingly expensive, the adopter will begin asking in earnest for evaluation data.

In anticipation of such requests the Educational Products Information Exchange has already begun to publish "Consumers Report"-type articles dealing with educational hardware, and the Far West Regional Laboratory is producing Integrated Information Units which compare project products on common characteristics. I suspect that we all agree that such developments are long overdue.

Thus far I have discussed change in terms of four steps: research, development, diffusion, and adoption. I have described in more detail what I see as the three steps in diffusion, i.e., awareness, interest, and evaluation. Let me now say a brief word about the trial process, the first stage in adoption.

The trial process consists simply of the innovation being applied on a small scale. Up to this point the primary actors in diffusion have been the editors of newsletters, state supervisors, people in the projects, book salesmen, a few university professors, and anyone else whose main function includes creating awareness, increasing interest, and providing information to assist the adopter in deciding whether or not to try the innovation. Most such people are ill prepared to assist when changes reach the adoption stage. To try, adapt, and install the innovation, be it a new course on Asia or plastic plumbing for new homes, requires sustained assistance at the local level, and that is the point at which most of you have the greatest concern.

During the trial period certain questions must be answered. Will the product produce the advertised results when used by our teachers with our students? Can the product be adapted to meet local needs and constraints? For example, can one use units in a sequence different from that intended by the developer and still achieve the desired outcomes? Do other teachers appear to be willing to adopt the program once it has been "proven" locally? If these and related questions can be answered in the affirmative the chances are good that the course, unit, materials, or whatever, will be adopted on a wider scale.

You perhaps are wondering why, at a conference on the role of Asian Studies in Ohio secondary education I have choosen to devote so much time to a discussion of the change process. I suppose it is because I don't really believe

that if you develop a better mousetrap the world will beat a path to your door. Too many of our past efforts have been based upon just such an assumption. All too often we have assumed that change would just happen and then have been surprised when it hasn't.

I certainly am not presumptious enough to suggest what the Ohio secondary schools ought to adopt in regard to Asian Studies. I will, however, make some recommendations of some do's and don't's once you have decided what it is you wish to change.

1. Once you have a program or product ready for adoption make the early adopters aware of it. Remember that these are the people who look to the impersonal, technically accurate, cosmopolite sources for their information, so you can use newsletters, news stories, section meetings at conventions, and special conferences such as this to make them aware of the innovation, whatever it is. Don't expend effort trying to reach the middle and late adopters who constitute the majority of school people and who look to local opinion leaders for information about what is both new and worthy.

2. Early adopters try innovations on a smaller scale than later adopters, so encourage small trial programs. Don't work at getting system-wide adoption of the innovation, or even department-wide trials.

3. The relative advantage of the new idea, as seen from the adopter's point of view, increases interest and the likelihood of an affirmative decision at the evaluation stage. Therefore, emphasize how the innovation does a better job than what the adopter presently uses. Note also that the local values may result in a different set of criteria being used in judging the innovation's worth. For example, the scholar may be satisfied with the fact that a new unit's information is accurate and consistent with contemporary interpretations, while the local adopters may be most impressed by the low per-pupil cost of the materials or their ability to fit into three or four different courses, as for example with the SRSS episodes.

4. The more complex an innovation the slower its rate of adoption. Therefore, if you wish to diffuse an Asian Studies Course you might want first to get widespread trial of a four day unit that requires few changes in teacher behavior. A complex unit or course on Asia which depends upon teacher inquiry skills, higher than average reading level, placement at an unusual grade level and cost 50% more than the materials presently in common use would be difficult indeed to diffuse through the adoption stage.

5. In order to overcome the notion that it is unprofessional to borrow, devise your materials in such a way that they must be adapted or finished at the local level. This way the teacher can adopt the materials without feeling guilty. Robert Hanvey's Anthropology

Case Materials Project at Indiana University is presently developing units based upon just such a principle.

6. The innovation can most efficiently be moved from the trial to installation stage if a fully developed feedback system is included in the package. Dramatic as the developmental trial data may be, late adopters will be more influenced by locally gathered data. This means that the developer must also furnish feedback instruments which document the degree to which the innovation performs under local conditions. Nothing is more frustrating to the adopter than to encounter a set of inquiry materials, with examinations that ask students to perform at the memory level. The construction of such instruments is difficult for the developer and next to impossible for the adopter. It is like asking the passengers on an airplane to devise ways to repair the engines.

7. Later adopters are more influenced by their early adopter peers than by impersonal of "foreign" sources. Therefore, during the trial period the local early adopter should be trained not only in how to test the innovation, but also in how to help his colleagues install it on a trial basis.

In closing, let me merely restate three of my major assumptions.

1. To the extent that there is an Asian Studies "problem" in the schools it is the result of insufficient and inefficient diffusion rather than lack of development.

2. There are identifiable points where educational diffusion often breaks down, resulting in the innovation never receiving a trial.

3. By basing our efforts upon principles supported by research we can maximize the impact of our meager diffusion efforts by partially neutralizing the impediments to change.

In short, let's be as scholarly about diffusion as we are about the innovation which we seek to diffuse.